Your Name

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Date

**Dead Poet’s Society**

**Introduction**

*Dead Poet’s Society* is an American drama film directed by Peter Weir which was released in the year 1989 (Weir). The film mainly illustrates the perspective of life, from an English teacher, which serves as a means of inspiration for his students at the prestigious “Welton Academy”. The plot of the film focuses on the journey of English teacher, Mr. Keeting, who has an exceptional fondness for poetry and literature and its influence on the lives of his students (Weir). The themes of the film i.e. “Non-Conformity”, “ Rebellion and Passion”, and “Freedom and Success” coincide with the ideas depicted in *Salvation* by Langston Hudges, Ralph Waldo Emerson’s *Essay of Self Reliance* and *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* by Martin Luther King Jr. Now the question is how these three separate readings are related to the ideas represented in the Dead Poet’s Society considering the different genres. This Essay will serve as a means of exploring the connection between the film and these readings.

**Discussion**

The theme of “non-conformity” best connects to the theme depicted in *Salvation* by Langston Hudges. In *Dead Poet’s Society*, the dominance of conformity is quite evident. Students are compelled to perform the usual practices at the academy such as a mandatory visit to the chapel, the same dressing, and recitation of the same “Four pillars’ Anthem (Weir). Another form of conformity comes from a society where most of the students in the Walton Academy are compelled to follow the steps of their parents (Weir). The basic idea of nonconformity is kept alive by the English teacher Mr. Keeting, who advises his students to curve away from the lines of conformity, society has drawn. Through his everyday motivational quotes and unorthodox methods of teaching, Mr. Keeting inspires his students to bend the rules of the society by perusing their dreams which are their identity. The same idea is depicted in Hudges’ *Salvation*. Let me give you a little idea about the plot of the story. Young Hudges attends an unusual revival ceremony in a church with his aunt where he is supposed to see Jesus in the form of light if he is saved from his sins (Hudges). Everyone seems to see the light and moves forward except young Langston and another boy named Westley. At the moment, Langston pretends to see the light by moving forward, however, he later questions the beliefs of a society which he thinks is just an illusion. He was told that he would be saved by Jesus but he was not, so he wonders why (Hudges). This depicts the society, blindly following beliefs without any logical reasoning. He was expected to conform to the beliefs of society as everyone prayed and cheered for him to move forward and show that he was saved without realizing the fact that it could turn the other way around.

The other piece of literature that I am going to analyze, while connecting it to the themes of Dead poet’s Society, is Ralf Waldo Emerson’s *Essay of Self Reliance*. Although, It is quite evident from the name that it is related to non-conformity, but Emerson also takes help for the concept of "Passion and Rebellion" derived from *Dead Poet’s Society*. Through his *Self-Reliance* essay, Emerson encourages his audience to realize that they are unique and have their own separate identities, regardless of society’s demeaning portrayal of beliefs (Emerson). He emphasizes on the concept of individualism, according to which every person must act according to beliefs of thought, experiences, Passion, and dreams (Emerson). They must drop the act of preaching of a society to be deemed acceptable and start focusing on dreams and passions that are desirable to one's self. In the film *Dead poet's society*, students are encouraged to follow their dreams and passion even if they have to break the rules formulated by society. However, one of the students of Welton Academy Neil Perry becomes a victim of this rebellion (Weir). As a result of perusing his dream of becoming an actor, he is defamed by his parents. The fact also gives birth to the aspect of selfishness expressed by society to protect its honor and beliefs.

The piece *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* by Martin Luther King Jr. is connected to the *Dead poet’s society* in various ways. King wrote this letter to address the complaints of fellow clergymen, published in a newspaper that he stumbled upon in jail. The concepts of nonconformity, rebellion, passion, freedom, and success are the main agendas of Martin Luther King Jr.'s Letter (King (Jr.)). Martin states that the laws formulated by the state can be Just and Unjust. Later, he gave many examples to prove his point. He emphasizes that some laws, that are not justified, are the laws that are against the will of God (King (Jr.)). That is why people are allowed to disobey them. He further adds that these rules are forced on the minorities, regardless of their culture, religion or beliefs (King (Jr.)). This shows inequality and discrimination, that is why he must fight for his people and himself by breaking those laws that are not in the Black Community’s best interest. This also tells us that conformity is not solely promoted by culture and society but that it also comes from the State and most importantly the World. The way certain individuals are discriminated against over each other based on their caste, religion, and language, proves the fact that the world is running on the principle of conformity. However, people like Martin Luther King are the ones who are willing to break these rules for their people. In *Dead Poet’s Society*, it is depicted that conformity makes a person a slave and freedom is achieved when the person breaks himself from the chains of society’s continuous torments inflicted, according to their desires (Weir). In his letter, Martin Luther King states the same philosophy, that freedom and success will only be achieved if we act ourselves, by breaking the laws that are not in our best interests (King (Jr.)).

**Conclusion**

The major themes depicted in the *Dead Poet’s Society* “Non-Conformity”, “Rebellion and Passion”, and “Freedom and Success” coincides with the ideas depicted in three readings I selected, such as, *Salvation* by Langston Hudges, *Essay of Self Reliance* by Ralph Waldo Emerson and *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* by Martin Luther King Jr. In *Salvation*, Young Langston becomes the victim of society’s envisioned beliefs and is left wondering why the culture and society work this way. In the *Essay of Reflection*, the author emphasizes that an individual should maintain his separate identity, while pursuing his dreams regardless of what society thinks. Martin Luther King in his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail,* addresses various aspects related to society’s conformation of laws and beliefs, which are not in their best interest. He states that freedom and success will only come to us if we struggle for it regardless of laws formulated by society.

**Works Cited**

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King (Jr.), Martin Luther. *Letter from Birmingham Jail*. Providence Forum, 2003.

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